

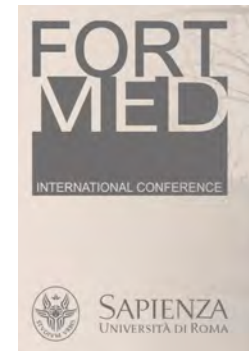
NIGHT OF FORTRESSES (NOF): A TRANSNATIONAL MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE & INCLUSIVE CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT



Interreg  Co-funded by
the European Union

IPA Croatia – Bosnia and
Herzegovina – Montenegro

GIFTSnet



Fortress of Culture Šibenik

GOALS:

Sustainable management and making a positive contribution to the quality of life in the community.

vision

We are recognized as a leading institution in Croatia and Europe in the sustainable management of cultural and historical spaces, innovative programming, and the creation of inspiring cultural experiences that enrich the community and connect people.

We develop the culture of Šibenik and enrich the community with diverse cultural content, creating a space for education, inspiration, and enjoyment.

mission

ACTIVITIES:

Our work aligns with the Croatian national cultural policies outlined in the National Plan for the Development of Culture and Media 2023–2027, as well as with the New European Agenda for Culture.

Our strategic priorities are:

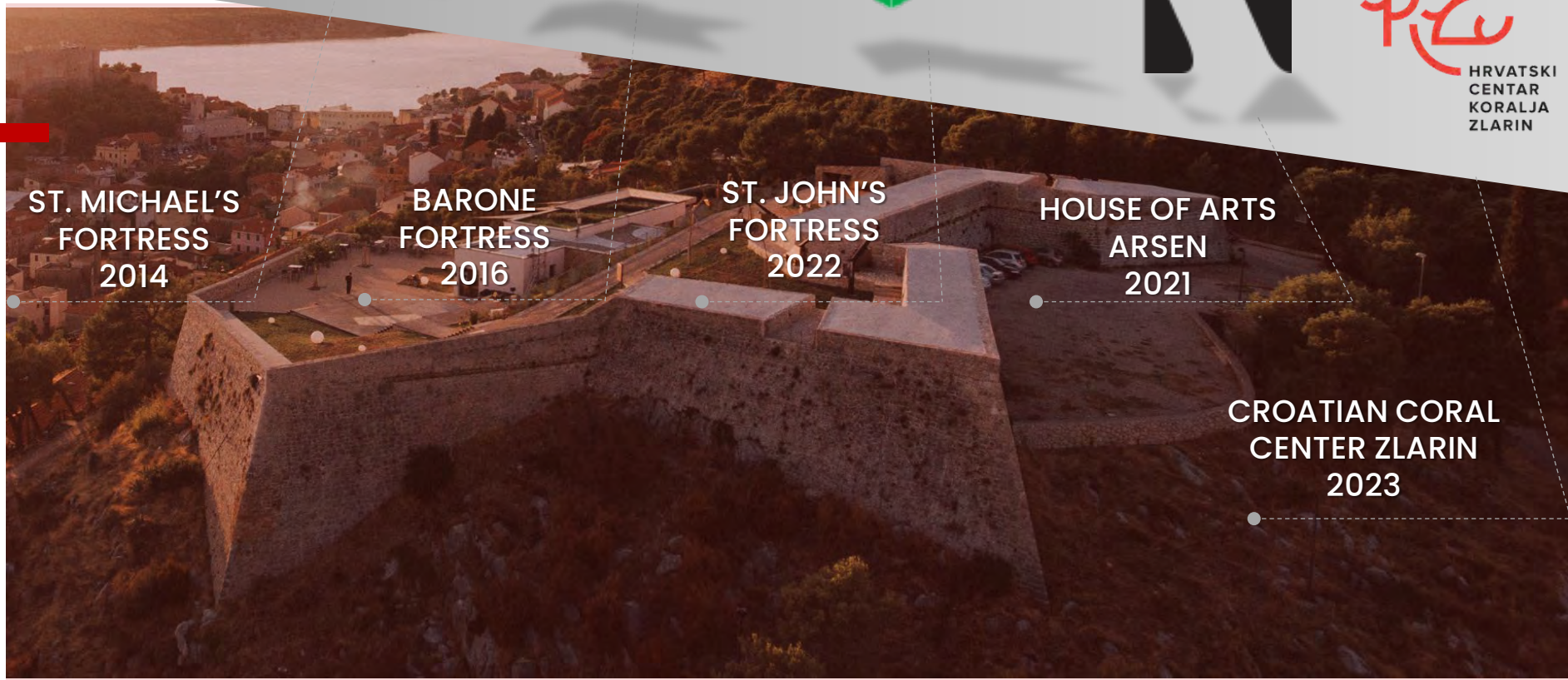
- 1** **Preservation and Valorization of Cultural Heritage**
- 2** **Development of Cultural and Creative Industries**
- 3** **Enhancing Cultural Accessibility and Audience Engagement**
- 4** **Connecting Culture and Tourism**
- 5** **Digitization and Modernization of the Cultural Sector**
- 6** **International Cooperation and Networking**



Sites & spaces



HRVATSKI
CENTAR
KORALJA
ZLARIN



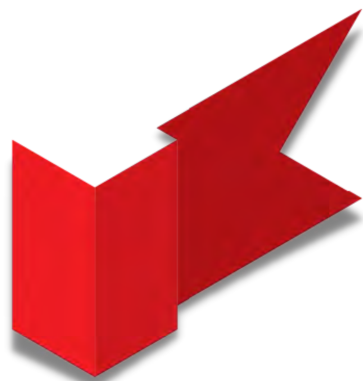
ST. MICHAEL'S
FORTRESS
2014

BARONE
FORTRESS
2016

ST. JOHN'S
FORTRESS
2022

HOUSE OF ARTS
ARSEN
2021

CROATIAN CORAL
CENTER ZLARIN
2023



What is the Night of Fortresses?

- ✓ International cultural initiative launched in 2022
- ✓ Coordinated event at fortified heritage sites
- ✓ Initiated and led by PCI Fortress of Culture Šibenik (Croatia)
- ✓ Focus on fortified heritage sites across Europe
- ✓ Combines cultural events with strategic heritage management
- ✓ Free, inclusive, and community-oriented public event

Photo source: <https://nightoffortresses.org/hr/galerija-2025>



Why Night of Fortresses matters?

- Fortified heritage often underused and disconnected from communities
 - Lack of structured cooperation among heritage stakeholders
 - Insufficient knowledge on sustainability in cultural tourism
 - Need to reposition heritage as part of climate and green solutions
 - Response to post-COVID and climate-related challenges
-
- ✓ Cultural heritage seen as pathway to green transition
 - ✓ Increasing cooperation & sustainability skills in the sector
 - ✓ NOF reframes heritage as part of the solution

Photo source: <https://nightoffortresses.org/hr/galerija-2025/>



Origins and Development

- ✓ Started as a cross-border event (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro) – part of Interreg project
- ✓ First edition (2022): 40+ sites, estimated 30,000 visitors
- ✓ Annual event held every May
- ✓ By 2025 – growth into a transnational network – 75 locations, 10 countries involved
- ✓ Includes coastal, continental, urban, and rural sites
- ✓ Expands from regional initiative to European cultural network
- ✓ Coordinated promotion and shared timing across all locations



Dual Function of NOF



1. Public Cultural Event

- ✓ Workshops, guided tours, exhibitions
- ✓ Concerts, performances, reenactments
- ✓ Educational and ecological activities

2. Strategic Framework

- ✓ Knowledge exchange and professional training
- ✓ Capacity building for heritage managers
- ✓ Systemic change in cultural heritage management



Photo source: <https://nightoffortresses.org/hr/galerija-2025>

Policy and Strategic Context

- ✓ Aligned with EU cultural heritage policies
- ✓ Supports:
 - ❑ European Green Deal
 - ❑ UN Sustainable Development Goals
 - ❑ New European Bauhaus values
- ✓ Challenges perception of heritage as barrier to climate action
- ✓ Positions heritage as part of the solution



Photo source: <https://nightoffortresses.org/hr/galerija-2025/>

Key Challenges and Objectives

- Limited diversification of cultural-tourism offer
 - Weak cross-border cooperation and networking
 - Lack of sustainability knowledge and tools
 - Insufficient inclusion of vulnerable groups
-
- ✓ Activate fortresses as living cultural spaces
 - ✓ Increase public participation and accessibility
 - ✓ Foster cross-border and transnational cooperation
 - ✓ Build professional capacities in heritage management



Photo source: <https://nightoffortresses.org/hr/galerija-2025/>

Goes Green Initiative (since 2025)

- ✓ New slogan: “Night of Fortresses Goes Green”
- ✓ Focus on sustainability and inclusiveness
- ✓ Heritage sites as promoters of green transition
- ✓ Integration into EU cooperation projects (GIFTSnet, FORTIC)

Zero-waste and plastic-free event model / Recycling and upcycling workshops / Eco-themed exhibitions and film screenings / Clean-up actions around heritage sites / Encouraging walking and low-carbon mobility / Exchange of recyclable waste for tickets

Photo source: <https://nightoffortresses.org/hr/galerija-2025/>



Capacity Building & Education

✓ Topics:

- Sustainable management
- Green programming
- Inclusive interpretation
- Event logistics

- ✓ Tailor-made workshops for site managers
- ✓ Creation of NOF Goes Green Guidelines and common visual identity & branding (branding strategy, slogan, brand values, communication and promotional tools)
- ✓ Formal network of organizers established in 2025

Print screen from: <https://nightoffortresses.org/en/night-of-fortresses-goes-green/>

To support organizers in the planning and implementation of the event, we have developed guidelines that promote the thoughtful integration and application of sustainable practices throughout all stages of event design and delivery.

📄 Night of Fortresses Goes Green – Guidelines

Practical guidelines for the application of sustainability principles within the framework of the event.

📄 Night of Fortresses Branding Strategy

A strategic document defining the event's identity, key messages, and communication direction, guiding its long-term development in line with the values of sustainability and social responsibility.



Impact and Added Value

- ✓ Increased visibility and attractiveness of fortresses
- ✓ Stronger community engagement and audience diversity
- ✓ Enhanced professional skills in the sector
- ✓ Promotion of inclusive and green cultural tourism – heritage linked to green transition and innovation
- ✓ Contribution to resilient cultural ecosystems – activated fortresses as living spaces



Photo source: <https://nightoffortresses.org/hr/galerija-2025/>



Key Takeaways

- ✓ NOF is a scalable and replicable model
- ✓ Demonstrates heritage as active community asset
- ✓ Connects culture, sustainability, and tourism
- ✓ Supports European cooperation and green transition
- ✓ Transforms fortresses from static monuments into dynamic, shared spaces



WEB: <https://nightoffortresses.org/en/>

MORE IN PAPER:

Barišić Bačelić, G. & Vrljević Šarić, Đ. (2026). The Night of Fortresses: A transnational model for sustainable and inclusive cultural heritage management. In: Russo, M. & Acierno, M. (eds.) *Defensive Architecture of the Mediterranean*, vol. XXIV, Proceedings of FORTMED - Fortification of the Mediterranean Coast, 19-21 February 2026, Rome. Rome-Valencia: Sapienza Università Editrice / edUPV <https://doi.org/10.4995/Fortmed2026.2026.21520>



Priorities:

Facilitate territorial cooperation and exchange to foster sustainable cultural management.

Enhance of the role of culture on local, national and European levels.

Interreg



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1

International cooperation and networking

2

Partners' and members' capacity building

3

Fostering partnerships and cultural initiatives



4

Connecting culture with tourism – showcasing joint values: Night of Fortresses

5

Increasing relevance and visibility of the heritage community and its members



THANK YOU

**PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN CULTURE
FORTRESS OF CULTURE ŠIBENIK**

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